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SOME PROFITABLE OCCUPATIONS FOR INVALIDS*

By SUSAN E. TRACY

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THE question of invalid occupation is one which should make its appeal to us through all of our five senses. To hear of it only would amount to little in most cases. One must see results and such results as are tangible or capable of being appreciated by the touch. Agreeable odor and flavor, even, must not be left out. One person learns by sight that which would never appeal to his ear, another by touch when neither sight nor hearing would convince. Accordingly I wish to present this subject to-day to your five senses, we will talk of its results, see them, and feel them, taking care that the last two senses are not offended.

We make a distinction between occupation and amusement. Amusements serve to pass time away, occupations treasure and redeem the time. However esteemed, I shall not include anything in the nature of games, and may we not raise the question as to whether a long convalescence may not be more profitably spent? We not infrequently find patients who play solitaire the greater part of their time. May we not help them to something which shall mean a little more to the world in general and, as a sure result, mean eventually much more to the patient himself? There is something tragic in watching the victim of a lingering but hopeless disease, playing his life away. In this we would by no means discourage entertainment pure and simple but strive to place it where it always belongs, as the normal balance weight to legitimate work.

Whoever succeeds in making an invalid happy and in maintaining this same state of happiness has gone a long way towards making him well. The secretory system has subtle connecting lines with his mental attitude, a temptingly arranged tray, a fine aroma, the sight of delicious fruit produce instant stimulation of digestive fluids; deeper breathing results from a sight of real grandeur, it is easy to take deep inspirations as we look out over a wide stretch of sea or up to towering mountains. May we not justly feel that wounds heal quicker where a tranquil mind exists, that the complex organism recognizes the atmosphere which dominates and settles down into comfort

* Read before the Suffolk County Nurses' Association, Boston, Massachusetts.

as naturally as a cat curls up before a fire on the hearth? If this be true a really good and efficient nurse must be vastly more than a tender of physical needs. To her who is to grasp first the patient's mental make-up, to appreciate his point of view, be it wide or narrow, and then, standing as she should, a true educator, be able to deftly dove-tail new thoughts of worth to the already existing interests, to her we award the palm and the whole world will join us and, furthermore, should we, in our shortsightedness and imperfect conception of the ideal, withhold our approval, still the world will find her out while our indorsed candidate may be forced to retire.

If, on the return of health, a patient wakes to the realization that the time has not been lost but has proven a true entrance to greater avenues of usefulness, his thought is no longer wholly bitter.

To this great end we, at the Adams Nervine Asylum, have set apart one hour weekly during the summer months to consider the mental possibilities of ten representative patients, taking them just as we find them. Ten hours is truly a mere scrap of time but many seeds may be sown in an hour and the trees thus planted grow not only through the summer but like all trees on the River of Life they "bear twelve manner of fruits and yield their fruit every month."

We have chosen as our first subject a little child of four years, of very poor family. The church, or some order to which the parents may belong, has sent a nurse who finds herself in what would seem to the casual observer, a barren locality. A brief, acute illness, it may be a pneumonia, will not permit of long residence; too serious for much entertainment at first, there will yet be a possible ten days or two weeks during which she may lead the way to true happiness. She can be almost prodigal in her dispensing as she will not be obliged to make the work hold out through weary weeks. In this lesson we stipulate only that no money shall be spent. Not a penny, unless it be a possible dime of her own, may this nurse spend and, strange to say, of all the inexhaustable sources of supply this house of poverty seems richest. The only secret is in learning to value its resources. Long before the child can lift a finger she can lift his thought. Even with an irritable child, without even pretending to amuse him, she may sit down where his eyes must face her and make from common material, something which a child loves. Indifferent at first, the interest comes involuntarily, soon questions follow and then the child is henceforth her own.

Common material in this house must be treasured. Egg-shells are saved to be converted into pictures, cradles, baskets and moulds

for desserts. Possibly some friend sends an orange or apple; this means a basket and a Jack-o-lantern. The common vegetables may all be converted into animals. A pasteboard box makes a fine cook stove, a few bits of leather or bright kid make nice dishes, if cut perfectly round and placed on a hot stove cover for a few seconds. Fancy paper she cannot buy but the druggist's packages nearly always come wrapped in colored paper. The beautiful things made from paper are countless. Never forget the value of advertisements in making scrap-books. Children love a series of connected things. Make a house, it suggests a barn; a barn, a wagon; a wagon, a horse, etc. One of the best things to introduce is a box of hot sand with a few tin dishes.

Our second subject is an older child, not so poor, in a Bradford frame. The way is long and a little money earned would be a help. Our engineer has made us a frame which might be made by anyone, this fits over the patient as she lies in bed and forms a substantial incline which admits of much work being done. She can weave, on a hand made loom, dolls' rugs and mats of various sorts, and make fancy booklets. Rag dolls and stuffed animals are popular and bring a good price. One of our patients has made more than a hundred double-headed rag dolls since leaving the hospital and has sold them all. Rake-work knitting may be done by anyone in almost any position, scarcely requiring sight. Beautiful children's carriage robes, hug-me-tight jackets, etc., are made in this way without difficulty. The rakes may be purchased of The Polypus Knitter Co., 150 Nassau Street, New York City. It costs one dollar and a half, but these were made by our engineer in a short time for the cost of a piece of dowel.

The third study is for a scarlet fever case, a boy of seven. Our main principle in this lesson is to teach something of permanent value, and although the articles made must be destroyed, the skill developed needs no disinfection. We learn to stitch up scrap-books of wrapping paper; experiment in making good paste with gluten flour and borax; and make a row of Christmas stockings with appropriate paper gifts for each member of the family. Modeling is good but clay unhygienic, we therefore send to the Holyoke Paper Co. and get at six cents per pound, paper pulp; from this we model animals, dishes and raised maps, the map being first drawn on a board and the paper pulp applied to form mountains, valleys, etc., lakes and rivers being left plain on the board and painted blue. When dry the whole may be colored with water color. This may all be completely burned. Latterly we have made our own papier mache by tearing newspaper into bits, pouring on boil-

ing water and soaking for a long time, several hours—when well picked to pieces and quite soft we mix thoroughly with a little thin, flour paste and find that it works quite as well as that from the factory.

As a fourth study we take a young girl of sixteen with fracture of femur and left radius. This, as you see, must be exercise for right hand alone. Using the same frame which we employed in the Bradford frame case we find that if work be firmly fixed she can easily do good leather tooling, color photographs, cross-stitch embroidery, print booklets, draw, paint and many other things.

The boy of ten will be helped through a tiresome mastoid case by stencil work, sign painting, and, given the trades to advertise, will be greatly interested in designing street-car signs.

The young woman in the hospital with a slow-draining wound can learn to make ribbon flowers and dainty raffia baskets without bringing too much clutter into the place.

An old lady with rheumatic legs will knit, do cross-stitch, patch-work, and make holders. A great deal may be learned from such a patient by starting a book for personal recollections,—a historical scrap-book. It always flatters elderly persons to be asked to tell what they remember.

I once asked a feeble old lady if she remembered a certain stitch in fancy knitting. It had the effect of a dose of whiskey. She sat up in bed, called for her needles and I soon had the rule for that stitch in my scrap-book.

The old man is a far more difficult subject. Sometimes he simply seems to be waiting to die. He likes to whittle and can make a good many nice little things in this way. There is an excellent little book by Mr. Larsson of the North Bennett Street School on whittling which will pay for the seventy-five cents it costs. Old men like to make some little thing which suggests their former business; for example, a man who has been a carpenter will like to make little wooden boxes or other articles which call for the employment of principles which govern larger work. One old gentleman has spent much time in braiding straw for hats, the straw being obtained from the factory at Millford, Massachusetts.

A German strung rug is a good piece of work for him. He likes almanacs and weather vanes and he very much likes to tell his experience,—a valuable collection of war stories it may be. We ought to do more to make our old man's last days profitable. Above all things he likes to handle a little money. He can sell postage stamps and feel that he is still in the business world. One of the hardest things

which is said to old people is "You don't need any money, you are well provided for." All self-respecting individuals need *some* money. It may be little but the sense of being penniless is not conducive to long life or happiness.

The middle aged practical man will not care greatly for all these little things. For him we suggest planning a house. He is sure to have ideas on building. Add to this a plan for a beautiful garden and possibly start seedlings in the house and so have the pleasure of watching things grow.

Home book-binding is an occupation which interests both men and women. No tools are required but knife, scissors, ruler, paste, needle and thread. We cannot say enough in praise of this form of occupation.

Our last case is a study for the waiting time before confinement, that time when money is grudged to the nurse, when time hangs heavy, may be transformed by the right sort of a nurse into a period of accomplishment and satisfaction. I would make two suggestions prominent here. First undertake some piece of work which is large enough to make a little haste necessary in order to finish, and secondly let it preferably be of some sort which has no direct bearing on the case, something which shall be a new and attractive idea which takes the place for a time of those which have been so persistently present.

At the Adams Nervine work is prescribed. A certain sort of work for a definite time, ordered by the attending physician and done under the supervision of a qualified teacher of manual training. We could not think of treating the many forms of nervous invalidism without it. But the thing above all else which makes the occupation training dear to my heart is the experience of its need through seven years of private work of all sorts before I was ever fortunate enough to know the Nervine and its methods.

The occupation work is thus a definite part of our curriculum. We include it, not for the benefit of the Nervine but for the benefit of the public to whom we send our graduates.

I would like to make a strong plea for the pupils of other training schools, that the need which is bound to be felt by every private nurse be recognized and provided for in her training. We have no more time than any other school. It has to be summer work but it is of so different a character that it is in itself a recreation. And the nurse finds at the end of the ten weeks that she has learned to do many things which bring her in touch with a large number of people. We have the advantage of a large work-room which is always open to visitors;

this the general hospital has not but it is by no means necessary in order to conduct such classes. Any common sitting-room or supply room having a large table and a little space for storing material will answer.

This paper was written to be illustrated by an exhibit of the class work. In order that it may be well understood its readers are invited to visit our work-room where they may gain something which may be passed along with profit.

THE COURSE IN HOSPITAL ECONOMICS AT TEACHERS' COLLEGE, N. Y., AND ITS NEED OF ENDOWMENT*

By IDA M. MARKER

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IN the little blue book of "Nursing Ethics," in the introductory chapter we may read:

If it were possible to bring together all the trained nurses of the present time to be reviewed, and have judgment passed upon them we should have before us a body of volunteers, each of whom occupies her position in the ranks, of her own free will and accord. At first, no doubt, we should be impressed with the magnitude of their numbers. But, when we came to concentrate our attention upon each regiment, as it were, and upon each individual in that regiment, we should be struck with some not altogether pleasant incongruities.

If we glance at the officers, we may find they too are not always in harmony; it is very apparent that each woman is a law unto herself. Her gaze seems to be largely centred upon her own particular regiment without a proper regard as to the manner in which its manœuvres or actions may affect those in front, behind, or on either side.

It was the master mind of the author of the volume from which this quotation was selected, that first promulgated the idea of a special course for the preparation of trained nurses for teachers of nurses, and superintendents of training schools and hospitals. Through the efforts of the American Society of Superintendents of Training Schools for Nurses, the special course in Hospital Economics was introduced into Teachers' College, Columbia University, for the purpose of bringing about a uniformity of training, and curricula, in the nurses' training schools throughout the land.

* Read at the annual meeting of the New York State Nurses' Association, Syracuse, N. Y., October, 1907.